

The Growing Submission Rate of Manuscripts from Countries with Emerging Economies

Over the past decade, an increasing submission rate from countries with emerging economies has been appearing in journal review portfolios. It was once an almost insurmountable barrier, not only from the point of view of the mastery of the customary scientific English language, but also the lack of adequate research training and an essential infrastructure to pursue contemporary research questions to foster an environment for highly competitive publications. However, it has become apparent that publishable and high-impact research no longer is an exclusivity of those economies that had the luxury to nurture such a culture, historically supported by significant public investments.

Competition has become a global matter. The standards by which universities are compared around the globe are based upon very similar principles and rules. As the corporate world's rating of its "Fortune 500," the "Top 500 Universities" ranking has become the yardstick to assess the competitive power to which bright young brains are exposed. Journal impact factors have emerged as the currency to assess faculty, researchers, and universities—probably more so outside the United States than within—with leading universities often defining their brand on the basis of ranked achievements. Nurturing an environment that promotes high-impact discoveries, tracking performance against peer institutions or institutions to which one aspires, has become the essential ambition of university presidents around the globe. Such trends are particularly apparent in Far East Asia and parts of the Middle East. With China introducing English as a second language at the age of 5 years, and given the sheer number of students in China, of which about 10% of the brightest equate in number to all students in the United States, it is not difficult to predict that discovery and its communication will become dominated by nontraditional partners.

Today, we encounter the leading edge of the globalization of research, a process that undoubtedly will grow over the next two decades, ultimately reaching a tipping point where today's nontraditional players may gain the upper hand in labor-intensive research. As science increasingly tackles more complex questions of societal meaning, acknowledging the impact of the burden of a specific disease on the national economy as well as recognizing the necessity to produce understanding for genetically diverse communities with often unique environmental exposures, multinational research partnerships, no different from strategies that inspire the corporate world, are essential.

However, today's reality is that an editor faces about four times the workload with the submission from a nontraditional country than with one originating from a more traditional research environment. Revisions, re-revisions, and "re-re-revisions" are not an exception. It should be understood, as well as appreciated, that the role of an editor is to guide the authors to reach the threshold upon which acceptance can be recommended, but—by no means—can he or she become an author.

In sum, while the trends toward the globalization of science are undeniable, today's realities are often frustrating to research teams from nontraditional research countries that work hard to overcome their local research culture while being exposed to a bar that often remains an insurmountable challenge. Based on the bigger picture, what we experience is the fact that major change is on its way and, as always, change means growing pains.

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